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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

ISN/RA FOR DAS MHAYWARD AND ASTUKALIN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ENERG](#) [IAEA](#) [KNNP](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: SAUDIS PREFER SEPTEMBER FOR CIVILIAN NUCLEAR
DISCUSSIONS

REF: ASTUKALIN-MGFOELLER EMAILS 7/14 AND 7/17 RE
NUCLEAR ENERGY DISCUSSIONS

¶1. (SBU) Post formally advised the MFA of the Department's invitation to participate in discussions on civilian nuclear cooperation on July 21 in an urgent diplomatic note. We also conveyed the information to the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), which functions as the de facto science and technology ministry, on the same day. KACST has since forwarded the information to HH Prince Dr. Turki bin Saud bin Mohamed al Saud, Vice President of KACST, and the likely chief negotiator, who is currently on vacation in the U.S. However, without specific instructions from the MFA or Royal Protocol, KACST cannot formally respond to the invitation.

¶2. (SBU) In light of the absence of most senior MFA officials who are also on vacation, Post has also been in touch with Royal Protocol officials, currently in Morocco with King Abdullah. We have requested they urgently task KACST or another appropriate agency to respond to the invitation.

¶3. (SBU) In a July 22 meeting, the acting President of KACST, Dr. Abdullah Al-Rasheed, told us frankly that August was "not a suitable time" for these discussions, as so many senior Saudi officials were on vacation. That said, he and Engineer Fahad bin Huraib, the Director of International Cooperation for KACST, would continue to seek a direction from the MFA or Royal Protocol regarding Saudi Arabia's response to the Department's invitation. Dr. Al-Rasheed assessed it would actually be easier to hold short discussions during Ramadan in September than during August, and suggested we consider this option. If KACST does receive permission to conduct the August discussions, he will follow up with Prince Turki, who could potentially travel to Washington DC while in the U.S.
GFOELLER